

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figs. 18-20. These sheets replace the original sheets including Figs. 18-20.

Each of Figs. 18-20 is labeled as -- PRIOR ART --.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendment and following remarks.

Objection

The Office Action indicates that Figs. 18-20 should be designated by a legend such as -- Prior Art --.

In response, each of Figs. 18-20 is labeled as -- Prior Art -- as shown in the attached.

Applicant respectfully requests that this objection be withdrawn.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-8 are pending in this application. Claim 1 is independent. All of the pending claims stand rejected. By this amendment, claims 1, 4 and 5 are amended. Claim 2 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. The Office Action indicates that the claim is unclear or vague partly because of the term "than" in the claim.

Claim 4 has been amended by deleting the term "than a predetermined position" as shown above.

Applicant believes that amended claim 4 particularly points out and distinctly claim the subject matter.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103

Claims 1-5, 7 and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,771,315 to Nanjo et al. ("Nanjo1"). Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Nanjo1 in view of JP 11-064923 to Nanjo Yusuke ("Nanjo2").

Claim 1 has been amended for further clarification. In particular, amended claim 1 incorporates the elements of claim 2 which is canceled as a result of this amendment.

Nanjo1, as shown in FIGS. 9 and 10, discloses that the rotating plate 31 is rotated by the motor 30, and the diaphragm blades 2A, 3A are thereby driven to narrow the size of the diaphragm aperture and the ND filter holding member 5A is also driven with respect to the diaphragm aperture.

However, as shown in FIG. 11 of Nanjo1, the drive of the ND filter holding member 5A (that is, the ND filter) is started concurrently with the start of the movement of the diaphragm blades 2A, 3A from the open position.

In contrast, claim 1 as amended is characterized in that 'the drive mechanism starts driving in a direction in which the optical filter is inserted into the region when the area of the light-passing aperture is decreased to a predetermined area by the movement of the light-blocking member', as shown in FIG. 14 (C). As Applicant understand it, Nanjo1 does not disclose such operation of the ND filter as required by claim 1 as amended.

Nanjo2 is cited as disclosing an ND filter having a V-shape configuration. However, there is nothing in Nanjo2 that teaches an optical filter as specifically recited in amended claim 1.

Accordingly, amended claim 1 is believed neither anticipated by nor rendered obvious in view of the cited references (i.e., Nanjo1 and Nanjo2), either taken alone or in combination, for at least the reasons discussed above.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is respectfully requested.

Applicant has not individually addressed the rejections of the dependent claims (i.e., claims 3-8) because Applicant submits that the independent claims from which they respectively depend are in condition for allowance as set forth above. Applicant however reserves the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims should such be necessary.

Applicant believes that the application is in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

AUTHORIZATION

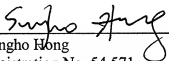
No petitions or additional fees are believed due for this amendment and/or any accompanying submissions. However, to the extent that any additional fees and/or petition is required, including a petition for extension of time, Applicant hereby petitions the Commissioner to grant such petition, and hereby authorizes the Commissioner to charge any additional fees, including any fees which may be required for such petition, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500 (Order No. 1232-5175). A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ENCLOSED.

An early and favorable examination on the merits is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.

Dated: April 30, 2007

By:


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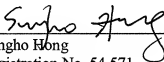
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